United Nations CEDAW/C/SR.1405

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
12 July 2016

English only

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-fourth session

Summary record of the 1405th meeting*
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 5 July 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Hayashi

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the Philippines

* No summary record was issued for the 1404th meeting.

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of the present document* to the English Translation Section, room E6040, Palais des Nations, Geneva (trad_sec_eng@unog.ch).

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.16-11608 (E) 110716 120716

1611608

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the Philippines
(CEDAW/C/PHL/7-8; CEDAW/C/PHL/Q/7-8 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Philippines took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Rebong** (Philippines) said that the Philippines had consistently been ranked among the top 10 countries for gender equality in the Global Gender Gap Index during the previous 10 years. In the previous six years, the Government had promoted gender equality in all areas of life, leading to a significant improvement in the empowerment of women, who were now well represented in the public and private sectors; the Supreme Court, Public Attorney's Office and Civil Service Commission, among others, were headed by women.

3. The Convention was implemented through the Magna Carta of Women, which was incorporated into public policies and programmes through the Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality Plan for the period 2013-2016, under which local and national agencies were required to devise gender development plans and allocate at least 5 per cent of their budget to implementing them.

4. Gender and development principles were being included in curricula at various levels of the education system, and public colleges and universities gave training in gender sensitivity. The Commission on Higher Education had called on all higher education establishments to include the gender perspective in their teaching, and Committees on Decorum and Investigation had been set up to combat sexual harassment. The updated guidelines on monitoring and evaluation procedures issued by the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines extended to persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions of gender.

5. The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law prioritized reproductive health-care services for women and facilitated access to them for rural, indigenous and Muslim women and women with disabilities. Employment opportunities and conditions for women had been improved through the Domestic Workers' Law and the repeal of the prohibition of night work for women. The "JobStart" employment programme, one of whose priority groups was young women, had been rolled out nationwide.

6. Efforts to combat trafficking in persons had been bolstered through the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and increased support for the Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking. Since 2005, 238 persons had been convicted of trafficking in the Philippines. The country had recently been upgraded to tier 1 in the United States Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report*, the highest ranking for efforts to comply with minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, and had been ranked first in Asia in the Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index. The Philippines had acted as the lead country on trafficking in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and had signed the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

7. It was expected that legislation to combat the mail-order spouses industry, prevent age discrimination in the workplace and provide sign language interpreters in the legal system would be adopted soon. A holistic view was taken of matters relating to indigenous persons. Women participated in, and indeed led, many of the peace processes in the country, and the national action plan that was required under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was being implemented. Women were the main recipients of conditional cash transfers, which were aimed at ensuring their children's welfare. Couples

received training on family development, including family planning and parenting, and were made aware of legislation to combat violence against women.

8. Filipinos working overseas, particularly women, were protected by a strategy that aimed to guarantee decent wages and working conditions for domestic workers, provide orientation programmes and training once abroad and conclude bilateral agreements with destination countries. Filipinos returning to the country benefited from a reintegration programme, and foreign agencies that recruited Filipino workers were required to pay deposits and ensure their recruits' welfare.

9. Women were recognized as effective first responders during disasters and had been granted important roles in that regard. Persons working in the legal system had received training on gender sensitivity, women's and children's rights and trafficking. Information on the Magna Carta of Women and violence against women had been disseminated through various events and campaigns. As a result, reporting rates of violence against women had increased.

10. The former President had been appointed a Head of State champion for the "HeForShe" campaign and had committed the country to increasing its support for the fight to end violence against women and to promoting women's economic empowerment and men's engagement in gender equality. The financial and human resources of the Philippine Commission on Women had been increased significantly.

11. The Philippines had adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and an Inter-Agency Committee on Gender Statistics had been established to gather data on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government worked with civil society and non-governmental organizations to eradicate violence against women, and the periodic report had been validated by various stakeholders.

Articles 1 to 6

12. **Ms. Patten** said that, although the enactment of the Magna Carta of Women represented a significant milestone, a great deal of discriminatory legislation remained. She asked what steps were being taken to review, amend and repeal discriminatory provisions of the Family Code, the Code of Muslim Personal Laws and the Anti-Rape Law, to cite a few examples, and adopt new legislation and what the time frame for that process was. She wished to know whether the Convention took precedent over the Magna Carta of Women. She invited the delegation to comment on the views adopted by the Committee in relation to communications Nos. 18/2008 (CEDAW/C/46/D/18/2008) and 34/2011 (CEDAW/C/57/D/34/2011). In both cases, the Committee had found that the State party had violated the Convention.

13. The Committee had been informed that the Government's exploitation of natural resources and its prioritization of corporate economic interests, as well as the alleged increased militarization of mining areas, posed a serious threat to defenders of indigenous women's human rights. She asked what was being done to address the disproportionate impact of large-scale mining operations on indigenous women and their vulnerability to many types of human rights violations and to what extent the Government guaranteed indigenous peoples' rights, including their right to be consulted prior to such projects.

14. **Ms. Nwankwo** said that despite efforts to improve women's access to justice, several barriers remained, particularly for vulnerable women. She would welcome information on any efforts to overcome those barriers, including through legal aid. She would also like to know what was being done to stop the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by women living in poverty, women with disabilities, indigenous and Moro women, women in remote areas and women with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions of gender who faced displacement, forced

relocation and violence as a result of development projects. She asked whether vulnerable women received specific assistance from the Gender Ombud when reporting cases of discrimination or violence, whether there were plans to employ sign language interpreters in all legal facilities and what efforts had been made to guarantee access to justice, particularly by addressing the stigma associated with and discrimination against women with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions of gender.

15. **Ms. Verzosa** (Philippines) said that, under the Women's Priority Legislative Agenda, a number of bills aimed at amending the Family Code had been put forward but remained pending. A bill to amend the Anti-Rape Law had also been introduced. The bill was intended, inter alia, to give greater prominence to the element of lack of consent in the existing definition of rape and to remove the "forgiveness" clause from the Law. The proposed amendments to the revised Penal Code concerned adultery and concubinage and the possible harmonization or removal of the penalties carried by those offences. Despite the fact that an anti-discrimination bill had not yet been passed, several bills to protect the rights of persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities had been brought before Congress. Moreover, at least 17 local governments had issued ordinances to protect the rights of those persons. It was hoped that the aforementioned bills would be approved by Congress in the near future.

16. **Ms. Mutin** (Philippines) said that there was no conflict between the provisions of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws, which governed marital relations, and those of the Magna Carta of Women, as the Code recognized and preserved the cultural identity and integrity of women, including indigenous women. Although the Code could be interpreted by non-Muslims as being discriminatory towards women, Muslims considered it to be based on and sanctioned by the Koran. On that basis, it was considered to prevail over Philippine civil law.

17. The proposal to amend the provisions of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws relating to polygamy and early and forced marriages among Muslims was still under discussion. Religious leaders in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao had endorsed a fatwa, or formal legal opinion, on the model Muslim family, which covered early and forced marriage, premarital counselling, comprehensive gender and health education for young people and gender-based violence. The fatwa stated that young Muslims should only marry when they had reached the required level of maturity. The generally accepted marriageable age for Muslims was 20 for men and 18 for women.

19. It was customary for Muslim women to approach a religious leader for assistance in resolving disputes or conflicts. Another customary practice was for a representative of the two parties to a dispute to meet and negotiate a mutually acceptable solution. In cases of divorce, when all attempts at reconciliation between Muslim couples had failed, a mutual agreement was drawn up, including a property settlement. Summary proceedings were instituted when a case was brought before the formal courts. However, an arbitration council comprising a court clerk and the representatives of the parties was formed prior to the divorce proceeding. Muslim women therefore had access to justice through both the customary and formal justice system.

21. **Ms. Dait-Cawed** (Philippines) said that the Government guaranteed the security of indigenous peoples living in areas where mining and other extractive activities took place by issuing certificates and land titles recognizing their ancestral land rights. Indigenous peoples could not be displaced from their ancestral lands if their free, prior and informed consent had not been obtained. Mining and resource extraction companies had to be in possession of an environmental compliance certificate and to have drawn up a social development plan with the communities that would be affected by their activities before they could be granted permission to operate in the Philippines. Those companies were also required to respect the right of workers to participate in policymaking and decision-making

processes affecting them and the rights, customs and traditions of local communities, including indigenous peoples.

22. The National Commission for Indigenous Peoples had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, under which both parties were to cooperate in examining any issues or concerns arising from the military presence in communities where mining or other extractive activities were taking place. The Commission had also set up a mechanism to coordinate inter-agency efforts to deal with violations of indigenous peoples' rights, including those committed by non-State actors. A coordinating committee tasked with overseeing dialogue between all mining industry stakeholders, reviewing all laws, regulations and agreements relating to the mining sector and making relevant recommendations to the Government had also been set up.

23. **Ms. Pajarito** (Philippines) said that, in the Philippines, national law prevailed over international law in cases of conflict between them. While the Government respected the customary laws of indigenous peoples and the Code of Muslim Personal Laws, it was also mindful of the need to fulfil its obligations under the Convention. To that end, it conducted dialogues and campaigns to raise the awareness of Muslim and indigenous leaders of women's rights and continued to review customary laws that discriminated against women.

24. Pursuant to a directive of the Supreme Court in 2004 authorizing the recruitment of sign-language interpreters to assist deaf persons during court proceedings, an increasing number of courts were now providing sign-language interpretation services. A bill requiring quasi-judicial bodies and tribunals to ensure the availability of those services in all proceedings involving deaf persons had been approved by Congress and was awaiting the signature of the President. The Department of Justice dispensed gender and disability awareness training with a view to improving the services and protection provided to women with disabilities.

25. Persons whose rights had been violated could seek a judicial remedy and/or claim compensation under existing laws and procedures without prejudice to the applicable statute of limitations. With respect to the question raised concerning communication No. 18/2009, it was regrettable that Karen Vertido had failed to avail herself of the legal remedies available to her within the prescribed period of time. However, the Government would explore the possibility of drafting a bill to address the Committee's concerns over the compensation payable to persons whose rights had been violated. The Government would respond to the views of the Committee after inter-agency consultations were complete.

26. Under the aforementioned bill to amend the Anti-Rape Law, the existing definition of rape would be changed to give greater prominence to lack of consent and the requirement for force or violence to be an element of the crime and for proof of penetration to be provided would be removed. Furthermore, the age limit for statutory rape would be raised. The Government continued to provide gender sensitivity training to judges, prosecutors and judicial officers on sexual violence and medical care and legal services to victims of such violence, including persons with disabilities.

27. Several rape crisis centres had been set up to provide rape victims with legal assistance, counselling and medical care. The Commission on Human Rights, which served as the Gender Ombud, also provided legal assistance to women whose human rights had been violated. The Public Attorney's Office provided indigenous women with legal representation free of charge in criminal, civil, labour and administrative proceedings. Indigenous women could also obtain legal assistance through the Indigenous Peoples Legal Assistance Fund.

28. Under Philippine electoral law, persons judged to be insane were not entitled to vote. A law had been passed to ensure that polling stations were accessible to persons with disabilities and the older persons.

29. **Ms. Verzosa** (Philippines) said that the Government was aware of the fact that vulnerable groups of women were disproportionately exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. It met frequently with representatives of those groups and took note of their concerns with a view to making the necessary legislative amendments.

30. **Ms. Nwankwo** asked whether the State party envisaged taking measures to address the stigma attached to women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and to improve the gender sensitivity of justice institutions, including transitional justice mechanisms.

31. **Ms. Patten**, noting that the Committee had adopted its views on the case of Karen Vertido in 2010, asked when the legislation that would enable her to receive adequate compensation would be enacted. She invited the delegation to describe the measures that it had taken to comply with the Committee's views in *R.P.B. v. the Philippines*.

32. **Ms. Jahan** asked whether the Convention and the Optional Protocol had been translated into the various regional and indigenous languages spoken in the country and how data were collected on the groups of women most frequently exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

33. **Ms. Verzosa** (Philippines) said that the Government was working on a new law to allow the payment of compensation when the treaty bodies found the human rights of a person or a group of persons to have been violated. Training had also been provided to police officers with the aim of reducing the stigmatization of persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions of gender. The training had led to improved procedures for dealing with cases of domestic violence involving transgender persons. A transgender woman had recently been elected to serve as a member of a provincial government and had promised to pursue the adoption of the anti-discrimination bill.

34. The Government had drafted a reply to the Committee's views in *R.P.B. v. the Philippines* and would transmit it to the Committee once the necessary consultations had taken place. The Convention had been translated into various languages. Both the Convention and the Magna Carta of Women were available in hard copy and could be consulted online. Collecting data on the groups of women most frequently exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination remained a challenge. However, the Philippine Statistics Authority collected data on indigenous people and persons with disabilities as part of the national census.

35. **Ms. Nwankwo** said that the State party was to be commended on having expanded the mandate and elevated the status of the newly renamed Philippine Commission on Women. She asked whether the Commission was endowed with sufficient human and financial resources to enable it to execute its mandate effectively. She also wished to know what steps had been taken by the State party to enhance the monitoring of expenditure under the gender and development budget and to ensure the judicious use of the resources available under that budget by local governments and State-run companies.

36. Noting that the Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality Plan, which served to implement the Magna Carta of Women, was coming to an end in 2016, she asked how the State party intended to evaluate the results achieved under the Plan thus far and to adopt a new plan to replace it.

37. While the State party was to be commended on its efforts to build the capacity of the Commission on Human Rights, the Committee had received reports of a general lack of political will to act upon its findings and recommendations in respect of violations of the

Magna Carta of Women. She asked whether the State party planned to enact legislation to strengthen the independence of the Commission and to make its recommendations binding on those agencies responsible for punishing violations of the Magna Carta of Women.

38. She asked what steps had been taken by the State party to act upon the various recommendations contained in the report of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission. She would also welcome information on the recommendations made by the Commission on Human Rights on the case involving flight attendants who had been discriminated against on the grounds of their age and sex and on the case involving a minor who had been discriminated against on the basis of her sexual orientation, whose case had been dismissed by the lower courts.

39. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that, while she welcomed the raft of temporary special measures adopted by the State party to accelerate the substantive equality between men and women presented in paragraphs 5 to 5.4 of the written replies (CEDAW/C/PHL/Q/7-8/Add.1), the fact that many of those measures were contained in bills that were still pending before Congress was a major cause for concern. She asked when the State party expected the bills to be approved. It would also be useful to learn how it monitored the impact of the temporary special measures that had been adopted and tracked trends in the participation of women in political and public life and in the diversity of women's representation in political and public bodies over time. She also wished to know what penalties were imposed for non-compliance with temporary special measures and whether the State party intended to adopt further temporary special measures for women with disabilities. It would also be helpful to receive additional information on the community-based social protection scheme to support women with disabilities mentioned in the Magna Carta of Women; on the mechanisms for monitoring compliance with the executive order on the employment of persons with disabilities; and on the specific interventions carried out on behalf of indigenous and Muslim women and women with disabilities under the Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality Plan.

40. **Ms. Verzosa** (Philippines) said that a programme to accelerate the implementation of the Magna Carta of Women had been devised and submitted for approval. The creation of 21 new posts within the Philippine Commission on Women would allow it to open a new division responsible for, inter alia, the monitoring of expenditure under the gender and development budget. It was hoped that more posts could be created in the future. The Government ensured the judicious use of the resources available under that budget by local governments by issuing joint circulars and providing local government officials with training on budget management. Regional coordinating bodies played a role in informing government agencies of their obligations in respect of the gender and development budget and could provide technical assistance if required. The gender and development budget was subject to an annual assessment. Government agencies were required to formulate gender and development plans that were in step with the Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality Plan and could make use of guidelines and checklists to determine whether their plans were gender-sensitive. Budgetary resources were allocated on the basis of ratings given by the Philippine Commission on Women. The Commission was in the process of developing a new framework for monitoring and evaluating the gender and development plans drawn up by the different government agencies.

41. Under the new administration, an assessment would be conducted of the Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality Plan and a new plan would be formulated on that basis. A progress report of the Magna Carta of Women had revealed that the gender and development perspective had been integrated into most Government departments, including those responsible for energy and tourism. It was nevertheless essential that real changes were made in women's lives, and the Committee's support in improving tracking and monitoring in that regard would be welcome. Improvements on the

ground had nevertheless been noted owing to initiatives such as the Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) Project, which fostered enabling environments for women's economic empowerment and included capacity-building for women micro-entrepreneurs, and the decision to make women the primary bearers of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) card.

42. **Ms. Rebong** (Philippines) said that monitoring was carried out to ensure gender and development mainstreaming at all levels. The pool of gender trainers on the Philippine Commission on Women had been expanded to provide training in women's empowerment to trainers who subsequently engaged with bodies at the local level and rural areas, thereby extending the Commission's outreach to the entire population. The Commission was also subject to auditing and reviews to measure the impact of its programmes. The Department of Foreign Affairs allocated 5 per cent of its budget to the implementation of women's empowerment programmes.

43. **Ms. Villar** (Philippines) said that the conditional cash transfer programme provided women with cash grants in order to ensure that their children went to school and had access to health care. The programme had benefited 4.4 million households to date, with around 89 per cent of those receiving cash grants. The programme comprised parenting skills training and monthly family development sessions run by NGOs and civil society organizations on, inter alia, disaster risk reduction management, active citizenship and gender sensitivity. The coordination of other support services, such as the "Sustainable Livelihood" programme, with the conditional cash transfer programme strengthened the social benefits afforded to women.

44. **Ms. Sy** (Philippines) said that the Philippine Commission on Women and the Department of Labour and Employment were advocating the enactment of a bill to give effect to the International Labour Organization Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), with a view to empowering women in the informal sector. In addition, the Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment programme offered grants, raw materials and skills training to poor and marginalized workers to enable them to secure their livelihood and develop sustainable enterprises. From 2010 to 2015, around 600,000 women workers in the informal sector had benefited from the programme. Women's employment rate was slightly higher than men's, women salaried workers made up almost 40 per cent of the salaried workers in the country, and the average basic wage of women was higher than that of men. The health of the economy was therefore partly attributable to women's contributions.

45. **Ms. De Dios** (Philippines) said that a court ruling had recently been handed down in favour of the retired female flight attendants who had filed an age and gender discrimination suit against Philippine Airlines, which had set an important precedent. Recently introduced legislation stipulated that a minimum of 1 per cent of all positions in government agencies should be filled by persons with disabilities. A number of public bodies, including the Philippine Commission on Women itself, had statutory requirements for the recruitment of women from a cross section of the population, including indigenous and Muslim women. The Local Government Code also established requirements for women's representation in local legislative bodies. The armed forces were encouraged to increase women's representation and the Civil Service Commission was making efforts to promote the recruitment of women to management positions. A bill establishing a quota for women of 30 per cent of parliamentary seats had not been passed, and discussions were being held to identify other ways to address the issue of women's proportional representation in the parliament. Certain smaller parties, however, had already secured proportional representation of women. Lastly, the Philippine Congress had recently elected its first transgender person.

46. **Ms. Verzosa** (Philippines) said that the Commission on Human Rights was not empowered to conduct investigations. A bill was pending in Congress, however, to strengthen the mandate of the Commission. A recommendation to that effect by the Committee in its concluding observations would be welcome, as a broader mandate would improve the Commission's ability to follow up on reported violations of the Convention. While it was regrettable that the case of the minor who had been subjected to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation had been dismissed by a lower court, it was expected that an appeal against the decision would be brought.

47. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that the Committee would appreciate disaggregated data on the participation of persons with disabilities in public life.

48. **Ms. Jahan** asked whether a comprehensive awareness-raising strategy was in place aimed at target groups, such as traditional and religious leaders and judicial officials, to combat the patriarchal attitudes entrenched in society. She asked what action the Government took in response to derogatory and discriminatory statements made by public officials. She would like further information on the possibility of introducing gender sensitivity training for all Government officials.

49. In view of the underreported violence against women owing to stigmatization, she asked what was being done to encourage women to lodge formal complaints and to raise awareness of the criminal status of acts of violence against women. She wished to know why violence against women had increased between 2011 and 2015 and whether prosecutions had been brought and sanctions imposed. She would like to know what policy measures had been taken to counter the culture of impunity relating to acts of violence against women, including rape, and whether the State party envisaged adopting broader legislation in order to cover all forms of violence, such as violence against persons with disabilities and indigenous persons, violence in the context displacement due to armed conflict and natural disasters and stalking. She wondered whether an assessment had been carried out to determine the impact of the all-female unit in the National Police for crimes committed against women on the rate of domestic violence and the extent to which women police officers were involved in investigations into such cases. Information would be appreciated on the women's desks in police stations, which were reported to be largely inoperative. Lastly, could the delegation provide information on the number of shelters for women in the country?

50. **Ms. Gabr** said that trafficking in persons both within and outside the country would remain a problem as long as the levels of poverty persisted in the State party. She asked whether the Government envisaged reviewing legislation on offences related to trafficking in persons, such as the law to combat the practice of mail-order brides. She also wondered whether there were plans to collect data, disaggregated by age and sex, on the causes of trafficking in persons in the most heavily affected regions, with an eye to prevention, protection and awareness-raising. Noting that victims of trafficking were often placed in protection shelters with victims of domestic violence, she highlighted the importance of establishing shelters specifically for women victims of trafficking. She asked what plans were in place for the improvement of victim identification and referral mechanisms to prevent the recurrent exploitation of women for the purposes of trafficking. Further information would be appreciated on reports of trafficking of women with disabilities and on plans to deal with that particular problem. Procedures for the prosecution of traffickers and officials conspiring with perpetrators should be strengthened, and proceedings concerning trafficking in persons should be streamlined. What accounted for the delay in the adoption of the anti-prostitution bill and when was the bill expected to be passed? What measures were envisaged to discourage the demand for prostitution and to protect and rehabilitate the women involved?

51. **Ms. Verzosa** (Philippines) said that various legislative provisions addressed violence against women, such as the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law, which was to be amended to cover peer harassment, and the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act. While no consideration had been given to the development of a comprehensive law to cover all forms of violence against women, the Government might initiate discussions on the formulation of legislation to protect specific groups of marginalized women, such as internally displaced women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. The Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children had been established to address violence and operated in cooperation with various ministries to strengthen implementation of preventive and protection measures and awareness-raising. The National Demographic and Health Survey included data on the forms of violence committed against women, with the 2013 Survey revealing that a fifth of women between the ages of 15 and 49 had been abused. The Survey would be conducted in 2017 to determine the impact of current measures in that area. Violence against women desks had been set up in 87 per cent of villages throughout the country to provide women with access to remedies at local level, and systems were being developed in cooperation with the Women's Sectoral Council to assess the impact of those desks. Training was provided to desk officers on how to treat women victims of violence. In addition, the Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking and the Inter-Agency Council against Child Pornography had been established with a view to channelling efforts to combat crimes in those areas. Although there was no legislation in place to address stalking, ordinances existed which dealt with street harassment.

52. **Ms. Pajarito** (Philippines) said that the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, adopted in 2013, was constantly under review and covered offences involving mail-order brides. Discussions were under way with stakeholders concerning data collection on trafficking in persons with a view to identifying the most affected regions. The Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking currently gathered data on the numbers of reported victims, the number availing themselves of national legal and social services and the number of trafficking cases brought before the courts.

53. The Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking guidelines for combating trafficking in persons at international airports had been implemented in 2012 and revised in July 2015. Under the guidelines, the Bureau of Immigration had the authority to defer a passenger's travel from airports and seaports on one of three grounds: being in possession of fraudulent travel documents; having a doubtful purpose for travel; or being identified as a possible victim of trafficking. In cases where a possible victim was identified, the person was referred to the Task Force against Trafficking in Persons. As a result of that preventive measure, the annual number of travel deferrals had risen from around 850 in 2012 to just under 4,000 in 2015. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas also ran pre-departure guidance programmes for Filipino women who were spouses, fiancées or partners of foreign nationals or former Filipino nationals and referred any persons identified as possible victims of trafficking either to the Task Force or to the relevant law enforcement agency. The Commission, in partnership with the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and recruitment agencies, also ran mandatory pre-employment orientation seminars, both in person and online, which had benefited more than 340,000 people. The Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking had a "public assistance corner" section on its website, where people could submit queries and complaints.

54. While the 44 women's shelters around the country currently accepted women who had been the victims of different forms of violence, the Inter-agency Council against Trafficking intended to build during 2016 a processing centre solely for male, female and child victims of human trafficking. Pending the completion of that facility, a temporary processing centre had been set up, with the building provided free of charge by a faith-based group and the operating costs covered by the Government. Social workers were

available in the centre to support the victims, and police officers could interview them there rather than at a police station.

55. Since 2005, 230 cases of human trafficking had resulted in the conviction of a total of 263 people, including 6 foreign nationals and 4 public officials. A further 7 criminal and 17 administrative cases against public officials were ongoing. The penalties applied were increased when the accused was a public official.

56. While there had been no cases of human trafficking where the victims were persons with disabilities, there had been one case involving a deaf witness, who had been provided with a sign language interpreter.

57. **Mr. Larga** (Philippines) said that the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration was the primary body for regulating recruitment agencies and protecting migrant workers. The Administration had run community and local government campaigns to prevent human trafficking and had recently introduced a mandatory pre-departure orientation seminar for first-time migrant workers traveling abroad for employment, which included a module on human trafficking and how to avoid becoming a victim of the practice. Through a data-sharing programme with the Bureau of Immigration, the names of migrant workers presenting travel documents at an airport could be checked against the database of the Administration: if workers were not found in the list of persons whose papers had been processed by the Administration, they were referred back to the Administration, and the recruitment agency involved was investigated and could potentially lose its operating licence as a result. Advertisements and public service announcements aiming to prevent human trafficking had also been aired on television and radio channels and shown at cinemas.

58. **Ms. Villar** (Philippines) said that the referral system on the recovery and reintegration of trafficked persons aimed to strengthen the network of referral agencies and establish a framework of interventions and services for victims of trafficking, while the referral system on violence against women and children aimed to provide an integrated and coordinated community response to ensure the safety of victims of violence against women and the accountability of the perpetrators.

59. The Government had opened rape crisis centres in two pilot regions: the centres provided access to doctors, police officers, prosecutors and social workers and provided a comprehensive programme for the recovery and reintegration of victims of rape. As a result of the pilot, an operating manual was now available for use in the creation of more centres in other regions.

60. Another Government initiative was the establishment of women-friendly spaces in evacuation centres, which aimed to address the practical and strategic needs of women during crisis situations. Such spaces had been set up in partnership with local government units, civil society organizations and the United Nations Population Fund to provide systematic gender-responsive service delivery to protect internally displaced women from violence and abuse.

61. Around the country, 11 centres for girls aged under 18 provided protection, treatment and rehabilitation for victims of abuse or exploitation, while 9 centres for women aged 18-59 provided temporary shelter and protective custody to victims of physical or sexual abuse, forced prostitution and armed conflict. The centres provided a range of services, including health and nutrition, skills training and legal assistance. The Government hoped to establish more such centres in other regions in due course.

62. The Department of Social Welfare and Development had implemented a programme to ensure the delivery of adequate recovery and reintegration services for victims of human trafficking. The programme employed a multisectoral approach to meeting the social,

psychological and economic needs of such victims and was running in all 17 regions of the country, including the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. A conditional cash transfer programme also provided support for victims of trafficking and for their families.

63. The men's organization Men Opposed to Violence Against Women Everywhere (MOVE) was actively involved in fighting discrimination against women and was currently finalizing a manual to ensure that all male employees and service users in the Department engaged with the organization. The Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities programme sought to promote the importance of the role of fathers and the sharing of household tasks and to eliminate machismo and traditional gender roles.

64. **Ms. Rebong** (Philippines) said that the Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking would forward to the Committee in due course the statistics requested on human trafficking, disaggregated by age and sex.

65. **Ms. De Dios** (Philippines) said that the Government recognized that sustained efforts were required in order to reduce the stereotyping of women. The media industry had set up a self-regulating mechanism to sanction outlets which demeaned women, and any outlets that did so could be suspended for a period of time. Guidelines had been sent to media outlets on how women and children should be portrayed; any outlet violating the guidelines would face administrative penalties and could potentially face a congressional hearing on the matter. The Philippine Commission on Women in particular had spoken out against the use in the media of degrading language by public officials.

66. The passing of the Anti-Prostitution Bill had been delayed because the repeal of article 202, on vagrancy and prostitution, of the Criminal Code was still being processed. Currently, only the Anti-Trafficking Law penalized the demand side of prostitution. Every effort would be made, however, to ensure that the bill was a priority for the incoming Government.

67. **Ms. Jahan** asked whether an anti-stalking ordinance was in place; whether the age for statutory rape would be raised from 16 to 18; what action the State party intended to take regarding the recommendation of the Commission on Human Rights for all officials employed by the Civil Service Commission to undergo mandatory gender sensitivity training; and what was being done to combat the phenomenon of online broadcasting of the sexual abuse of children, particularly girls, by family members.

68. **Ms. Pajarito** (Philippines) said that, with regard to the online broadcasting of the sexual abuse of children by family members, the Government was strengthening its partnerships with the authorities of other nations, including the United States of America, the Netherlands and Australia. In one particular case, a foreign government had provided an IP address, which the national authorities had successfully tracked to a location in Mindanao. The victims in the cases were not required to testify: cases could be brought based on electronic evidence and the testimony of law enforcement officials. In April 2016, a case had been successfully prosecuted based on the testimony of national and foreign law enforcement officials.

69. **Ms. Rebong** (Philippines) said that the Civil Service Commission training programme had been in place prior to the recommendation made by the Commission on Human Rights; however, the Government needed to intensify its efforts to reach all officials at the highest and lowest levels of the Civil Service Commission.

70. **Ms. Verzosa** (Philippines) said that Quezon City had recently passed an ordinance on the stalking and harassment of women as part of a pilot initiative under the Safe Cities programme run by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and it was hoped that more ordinances would follow in other cities.

Efforts were being made to harmonize legislation on rape and set the age of statutory rape at 18.

Articles 7 to 9

71. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao, while commending the State party on its success in achieving gender parity in third-level positions of the civil service in just five years, asked what measures had been taken to ensure the participation and equitable representation of women in decision-making processes; whether the Government planned to introduce quota systems for women at all levels of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of power; and how the Government would ensure the effective involvement of women from disadvantaged groups in the development of legislation and policies, particularly those which directly affected them, and in political and public life in general. She also wished to have further details of the Political Party Development Act, including its status and timeline for adoption. She wondered what the most recent statistics were on the representation of women in diplomatic positions and international organizations; whether the Government intended to take further measures to encourage the participation of women at decision-making levels in those fields; whether there had been a systematic assessment of the success of the Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for the period 2010-2016 for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008); whether that Plan would continue beyond 2016; and what degree of participation had been enjoyed by women in the implementation of the Plan.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.